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# THE ART AMATEUR

DEVOTED TO ART IN THE HOUSEHOLD

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## MY NOTE BOOK.



**D**URING the past year or two so many first-class old paintings have been brought to this country that it is not surprising to hear now that an exhibition of "old masters" is proposed. Hitherto the very words "old master" have been enough to prejudice the American picture buyer, so often has he been induced to give his dollars in exchange for pictures either attributed falsely to the great painters of the past, or authentic as to pedigree, but "restored" or repainted so as to be comparatively worthless. There are such paintings in the collections even of some of our most enlightened connoisseurs, who remain stolidly unconscious or incredulous as to the fact. This alone, I think, would be enough to make impracticable such an exhibition as is proposed. No Committee on Selection would dare to tell certain of our "art patrons:" "We want such and such of your pictures, but we must decline to take such and such which you kindly offer us." With even the few modern painters represented in the recent exhibition of "A Hundred Masterpieces" of the contemporaries of Barye, the Committee on Selection did not succeed in keeping out pictures unworthy of the occasion. How much more difficult would such a committee find it to keep out suspected canvases at an exhibition of "old masters"?

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ADMIRABLE examples of certain "old masters" doubtless could be shown—and such a collection, it is understood, is to be made by a well-known firm of picture dealers—but a really comprehensive exhibition, such as I understand is proposed, of the best examples that can be brought together in this country of all the schools, is out of the question. Apart from the objection already urged, it would seem premature to attempt an enterprise of such scope; for what could we show of the Italian masters, of the German school or even of the Flemish school? Next to nothing. Of the Flemish school we could produce a Vandyck or two and a few fair pictures by Teniers. Of the Spanish, we could find some good specimens of Velasquez and, perhaps, of Murillo; but it is on the Dutch masters, Rembrandt, Franz Hals, Van der Meer, of Delft, and Pieter de Hooghe, and on the English painters, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Turner and Constable that we

should have to depend. In some of these names we could make a strong showing—of some of the Dutchmen especially. But this would be mainly in single portraits; even in the case of Rembrandt, who is so largely represented in this country, but the full scope of whose powers cannot be seen in any isolated figure, however fine it may be. We have in America no example of Rembrandt's wonderful grouping, with its contrasts—in light and shade, in the sentiment of the figures represented and in the arrangement of the composition—to tell us of the painter of "The Lesson in Anatomy,"

treasures of the Princess's collection, the real "Dr. Tulp," plainly recognizable as identical with the central figure in "The Lesson in Anatomy." This superb picture is now in this country, with the delightful companion portrait of the doctor's wife. But of these I am asked to speak no further at present. Should an exhibition of "old masters" be held in this city, probably both will appear at it. Let Mr. Havemeyer send his "Doreur" and Burgomaster Van Berensteyn and His Wife, and we shall see such a group of single portraits by Rembrandt as cannot be surpassed in any city in Europe.

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THE Princess de Sagan possesses still another pair of portraits by Rembrandt, of man and wife, said to be unsurpassed. A hundred thousand dollars is her asking price for these, because just now she happens to be well supplied with ready cash. But the dealers have no belief that this happy state will last long. One of these days it will be known that the Princess's purse is empty, and then one of them will pounce down upon her and bear away the last of her fine Rembrandts; just as Mr. Durand-Ruel is credited with having secured the "Portrait of a Man" for Mr. Ellsworth. That enterprising and persuasive gentleman lined his pockets with bank-notes and hurried to Trouville, where he found the eccentric Princess fresh from her sea bath and delighted to see him. He offered her a round sum for the Rembrandt. A bargain was made, and he hurried back to Paris with an order in his wallet for the delivery of the picture to him. But he presented it not an hour too soon. He had hardly left the lady's house with the coveted treasure in his carriage before a telegram from her was received by her majordomo, ordering him not to deliver it. As usual, she had repented of her weakness, as the dealer knew that she would. But as he had the picture and she had his money for it, that

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BUT I am digressing. Before me and the reader is an illustration of "The Man and the Armor," which is described in the catalogue of the Secrétan collection as the work of Rembrandt, and as having passed successively through the Gueffier, Robit, Georges Hilbert, Blake and San Donato collections. On the dispersion at auction of the last-named gallery, the picture was bought by a dealer, who sold it to Mr. Secrétan. The Secrétan catalogue also says that it was in the Exposition des Cent Chefs d'Œuvres at Paris, in 1883. But that must



"THE MAN WITH THE ARMOR." PAINTING ATTRIBUTED TO REMBRANDT.

at the Hague, of "The Angel Appearing to the Family of Tobias," in the Louvre, of "The Night Watch," at Amsterdam, or the "Syndics of Drapers."

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BUT if we possess no composition like "The Lesson in Anatomy," we have the portrait of at least one of the group composing it, and that executed in a manner that gives all the art that Rembrandt could put into a single portrait. I do not refer to the masterly "Portrait of a Man," wrongly described as that of Dr. Tulp, from the collection of the Princess de Sagan, which Mr. Ellsworth has carried off to Chicago, but to another of the

ended the transaction so far as he was concerned.



be a mistake. It is not in the catalogue of that exhibition. The titles of only fourteen "old masters" are to be found there, and among these only two of pictures ascribed to Rembrandt—viz.: "Le Doreur" and "Tête d'homme coiffé d'un chapeau de feutre." I should like to hear from Mr. Sedelmeyer how such a strange mistake happens. It would have been strange, indeed, if the picture had really been selected as one of the best examples of Rembrandt to be found in Paris, where there are so many and such good ones. At all events, "The Man with the Armor" is now in New York, and is shown privately at the rooms of The American Art Association. The condition of the picture was not satisfactory on its arrival in this country, and I believe it had to undergo treatment. While it may not be considered in any sense a masterpiece, and it may be urged that it lacks the force of Rembrandt's best manner, in many respects "The Man with the Armor" is an interesting canvas. It has been engraved by Lienhoff, and at the time of the San Donato sale there was an etching of it in *L'Art*, of which the illustration in *The Art Amateur* is a reduced copy.

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FRANZ HALS might be represented by Mr. Havemeyer's *Scrivener and His Wife*, from the Secrétan sale, panels only  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  inches each, and perhaps some examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Of Pieter de Hooghe there would be several excellent examples, leading, of course, with Mr. Havemeyer's great purchase from the Secrétan collection, "The Consultation" (or "The Advocate," as it is now called), fully described in "My Note Book" at the time. It was thought that the chief male figure was a doctor; now he is said to be a lawyer. It makes little difference apparently what the story of the picture may be, and really it makes no difference at all who the painter was. One French critic, indeed, said that this picture must be by Van der Meer, of Delft, because it was too good for De Hooghe. But apart from this gratuitous fling at the latter, this critic, if he be in earnest, is strangely unobservant of the difference in technique of these two fine colorists—of De Hooghe's direct method of painting by strong and supple touch, and Van der Meer's of laying on his pigments in little patches and uniting them by glazing. True, rich, warm coloring, contrasted light and shade, especially in the foreground, and exquisite feeling for atmosphere throughout are characteristic of both. The French, long ago, made the mistake of slighting Pieter de Hooghe, and this playful critic, I suppose, is only consistent in continuing it.

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JUST as the English have been taught by the French to appreciate their great Constable, and Bonington, hardly less great—the other day, by the way, I came upon the notice of the latter in Spooner's *Dictionary of Painters*, where he is dismissed in a brief paragraph as "a respectable painter of landscape"—so have the Dutch been taught by the English to appreciate the great De Hooghe. Thanks to the editor of the French art journal, *L'Art*, some of the finest examples of Constable are now to be found in the Louvre. There are famous works of De Hooghe at the Louvre and in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague; but if a Dutchman wishes to see the delightful Pieter to perfection he must go to the National Gallery in London, unless, indeed, he choose to journey to New Amsterdam, and there he will find in Mr. Havemeyer's "Consultation" or "The Advocate," if you will—as fine an example of the master as is to be seen anywhere. Nor do I mean to say that, at his best, Van der Meer is inferior to the latter, although so sound a critic as Havard finds him so. Go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and see that wonderful little blue picture of the woman at her toilet by the open window, and say if anything could be more charming in that style of picture—the style of De Hooghe and Van der Meer alone; they had no rivals and no successors. Another fine De Hooghe, by the way—an out-of-doors view—has lately arrived in New York, and should certainly be shown at any exhibition of the Dutch "old masters" that may take place.

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SOMETIMES the most unpromising places furnish the best hunting grounds for the connoisseur and dealer in works of art. But too much importance is not to be attached to this statement. They are still talking in London, I hear, about the experience that Mr. Duveen, of Fifth Avenue, a few months ago, had in Wardour Street—about the last place to expect to find a bargain;

disreputable Wardour Street, the synonym the world over for flimsy modern furniture and mock antiques. Passing through, in a hansom cab, one day, Mr. Duveen noticed in a shop window what looked like a Boucher tapestry; but it was heavily framed like an oil painting, and altogether so in keeping with its surroundings that he laughed at the idea that it might be genuine. Still, he could not get the notion out of his head, and several days later he found himself in the shop, which is kept by a man named Borden, with the framed object in his hands. As seen from under the glass, it certainly seemed soft and beautiful in color and fine in texture, and the design assuredly could be nobody's but Boucher's. Here, then, was either one of the most precious of the old silk tapestries of the Gobelins factory or a worthless imitation. The following dialogue took place:

"How much do you want for this?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Take it out of the frame and let me examine it."

"No, sir. You can buy it as it is, or leave it."

"But, my friend, you are unreasonable. You can't expect me to pay fifty pounds in the dark like that."

"You can do as you please about it. A lady left it here for sale at that price, and I only make ten per cent."

The man had recognized his visitor, and, like many of his kind, did not care to do business with a dealer.

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MR. DUVEEN left, but he only walked a few steps, into Oxford Street, to the well-known shop of his brother Joel, with whom he presently returned, having told him of his "find," and offered to divide the risk with him if he thought well of it. After a brief consultation between the brothers, and a vain attempt to induce Borden at least to take the back out of the picture frame, they paid the man his price. In another minute the covering was off, and revealed before them was one of the most charming specimens of fine silken Gobelins tapestry they had ever seen. It was a little upright panel, representing a characteristic pastoral scene, and, no longer concealed by the broad frame, was found an exquisite floral border, which, thanks probably to this very protection, was in perfect condition. The piece evidently had been designed to fill the frame of a small fire-screen.

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THE brothers went off rejoicing over their bargain, but just how much it was worth in the market neither of them knew; such a rarity is seldom offered for sale. On reaching the Duveen shop, full of excitement, who should they find sitting there but young Weil, from Paris, who, among other dealers, had come over to attend the sale, at Chislehurst, of the effects of the ex-Emperor Louis Napoleon. His mother, you may have heard, is perhaps the best judge and the largest buyer in the world of fine tapestries. When he saw this piece he was wild with excitement over the prospect of bringing it home to her in triumph.

"What will you take for it?" he asked.

"A hundred and fifty pounds," said Joel Duveen.

The young man, mentally turning the sum named into francs, and getting mixed in the calculation—the conversation was in French—exclaimed: "I'll give you seventy-five hundred francs;" which, of course, was just twice as much as he had been asked for it.

The brothers exchanged glances. "I don't think we'll sell it at all," said Joel, and he went upstairs, pretending to have a customer waiting for him.

"Oh, but I must have it," cried Weil, and he sat down, declaring that he would not go away without it.

"I'll give ten thousand francs for it."

"No, no; we won't sell it," said Henry. But at last he told Weil he would part with his half interest in the purchase for two hundred and twenty-five pounds. The other brother finally was persuaded to sell his share for the same amount, and the young man handed over to each the equivalent of that sum in notes of the Bank of France, and joyfully departed. It was subsequently learned that, immediately after reporting to his mamma, young Mr. Weil was sent, with the tapestry, to see Baron de Rothschild, and that he returned with a cheque for a hundred and fifty thousand francs.

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THE exhibition of American landscapes at the Union League Club was very remarkable, not only as showing how greatly our painters have advanced in the art, from the old-fashioned panoramic scene of Bierstadt, suggestive of the nearly obsolete "Hudson River School," to the masterly "Gray, Lowery Day" of Inness and the

poetic "Starlight" of Tryon, but from the fact that the charming collection was all from the gallery of one man. Mr. Thomas B. Clarke has now shown the club and its friends nearly the whole of his collections, and under the most favorable conditions of lighting and surroundings. There remain his American figure subjects, only a small portion of which, I believe, has been seen at the Union League Club. It may be remarked that if Mr. Clarke patriotically prefers to confine his purchases of paintings to the work of his own countrymen, he is most catholic in his tastes outside of these. From ancient Greek vases and figures in terra-cotta to porcelains of China and Japan is as far as it is from either of these to his American landscapes. Concerning most of the latter, notice has been made in *The Art Amateur* on their appearance at various exhibitions. To his objects of Oriental art, it has been my good fortune to have had frequent occasion to refer, and in another column of the present number of the magazine mention is made of his contributions, among those of others, at the recent Union League Club exhibition, of Greek art.

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AS to the proper pronunciation of the word "Angelus," *The Sun* says:

"The prevailing opinion seems to be that it is pronounced with the g hard and the accent on the penultimate. A small but determined band of scholars insists, however, that the word is French, and should be sounded somewhat like 'Ongelu,' with a very marked protrusion of the lips in emitting the u."

Angelus is distinctly Latin, and begins a prayer, just as "Ave Maria" does. Probably no French person ever pronounced it "Ongelu," and assuredly no Latin "scholar" of the present day would think of giving the g hard. Americans are safe in pronouncing the word as if it were written An'-jel-us.

MONTEZUMA.

#### THE AMERICAN FINE ARTS SOCIETY.

THERE has long been a great need for some such organization as has now been formed by the coalition of the five principal art associations of New York. The Society of American Artists, The Architectural League, The Art Students' League, The Society of Painters in Pastel and The New York Art Guild have united to form the new society, whose first care it will be to erect a proper building for exhibitions, schools and committee rooms; and which will doubtless, as a body, exert the most potent influence on the future of American art. Of the incorporating societies, all except the Art Guild are already well known to the public through the exhibitions which they have held separately. The Art Guild is comparatively new and unknown, except to artists. Its functions, however, are of a very important nature, and it is largely due to its efforts that the new society has been established. It takes charge of works intended for distant exhibitions, insures their owners against damage in transit and against dishonesty on the part of agents and salesmen. It was the first practical outcome of the well-grounded dissatisfaction of artists with the lay management of the numerous exhibitions to which they are annually invited and expected to contribute. It is needless to say that this dissatisfaction has had a great deal to do with the formation of the larger society.

The fund required for the new building will be something like \$200,000. Of this the various societies named have subscribed \$50,000. A Gift Fund (so called) has been started, which already amounts to \$30,000. A subscription of \$100 to this fund secures the subscriber an honorary life-membership, with admission to all private views and five tickets to each of the exhibitions given by the society or any of the bodies represented in it. It is understood that the rental of the building, which will be on Forty-third Street, near Fifth Avenue, will bring in at least \$9000 per annum. Whatever sum may be found necessary, when all subscriptions are in, to complete the fund, will be obtained by mortgage or by the issuance of stocks and bonds. The trustees of the Gift Fund are Messrs. Henry G. Marquand, Cyrus J. Lawrence, Edward D. Adams and E. C. Moore. Among the subscribers are Ex-Vice-President Levi P. Morton, Mr. John Jacob Astor, Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mr. Martin Brimmer of Boston, Mr. S. P. Avery, Mr. William Allen Butler and Mr. D. O. Mills. The officers of the American Fine Arts Society are: President, Mr. Howard Russell Butler; Treasurer, Mr. William Bailey Faxon, and Secretary, Mr. H. J. Hardenbergh. The offices are at 47 West Forty-Second Street.